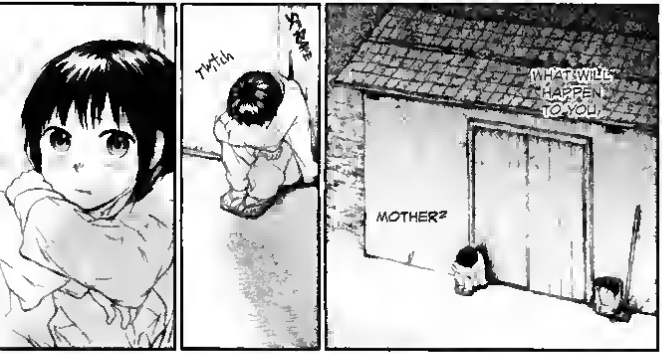
Kemono no Souja
The Beast Player

VOLUME 1 - PROLOGUE, PART 2

Translation: Kurenai
Scans & edits: Ink
Proofreading: Conner

et-caetera.net
#etc@irc.irchighway.net

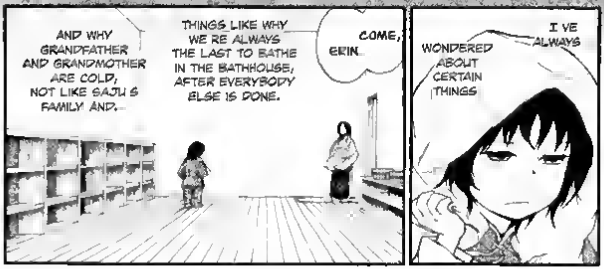
IS AN ATRO-CIOUS CRIME!
LETTING KIBA DIE...

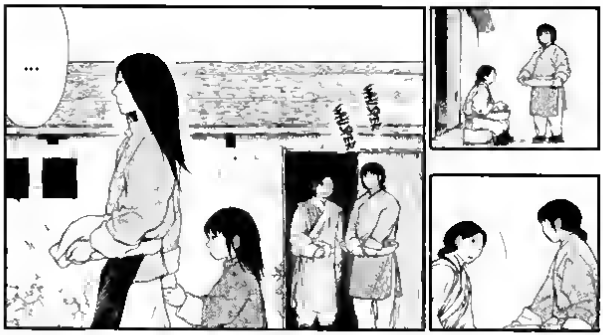

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO YOU, MOTHER?

The Ahryo, People of the Mist

Ap
SAJU ONCE SAID TO ME...
AHRYO..
...I LET YOU, AN AHRYO, TAKE CHARGE...
...
DO ALL THE AHRYO HAVE GREEN EYES?
SAY...
YOUR EYES ARE GREEN JUST LIKE YOUR MOTHER'S.
ERIN,

ARE YOU POSSESSED?
THEY CALL THE KIDS AKUN-MEH-CHAI
AND
DO YOU ACTUALLY HAVE MAGIC POWERS?
THEY SAY IT'S NOT COMMON FOR VILLAGERS AND THE AHRYO TO HAVE KIDS TOGETHER


AND WHY GRANDFATHER AND GRANDMOTHER ARE COLD, NOT LIKE SAJU'S FAMILY AND...
THINGS LIKE WHY WE'RE ALWAYS THE LAST TO BATHE IN THE BATHHOUSE, AFTER EVERYBODY ELSE IS DONE.
COME, EWIN.
I'VE ALWAYS WONDERED ABOUT CERTAIN THINGS


...
WHISPER
WHISPER

STANDS OUT FROM THE REST OF THE VILLAGERS
HOW, MOTHER
SHE'S TALLER THAN ANYBODY IN THE VILLAGE
HER FACIAL FEATURES AND THE COLOR OF HER EYES ARE UNIQUE, TOO
WHEN DID I START NOTICING?
AM I AN AKUN-MEH-CHAI?
ARE YOU AN AHRYO, MOTHER?
IS THAT WHY THEY ARE ACCUSING YOU?

...
YOU MUST BE TIRED
SLURP
YES.
LET'S HAVE A HEARTY MEAL.
TO PREPARE US FOR TOMORROW.
HUH?
SHALL WE HAVE WILD PORK... FOR SUPPER TONIGHT?
ARE WE
ARE WE REALLY HAVING WILD PORK FOR SUPPER?
EVEN THOUGH WE'RE NOT CELE-BRATING ANYTHING?
SIZZLE
SIZZLE

Crackle
Crackle
?
ARE YOU HUNGRY?
SUPPER IS COMING ALONG
FISH
FISH
BLAZE

MOTHER?!

FORGIVE ME.
...

?
THAT I DID A TERRIBLE THING.
IT MUST SEEM TO YOU...
?!
HAVE THE WHISTLE
I AM RELIEVED THAT I NO LONGER...
BUT...
TO BE...
PERFECT-LY HONEST,
I...
HATED USING IT.
WH-WHY?
HUH?

I HATED SEEING TOHDA GO RIGID
WHENEVER I BLEW THE WHISTLE
IT WAS A PITIFUL SIGHT— BEASTS AT THE COMPLETE MERCY OF MEN…
WHEN IN THE WILD, THE CHOICE TO LIVE OR TO DIE WAS THEIR OWN

SEEING THEM GROW WEAKER BEFORE MY VERY EYES…
WAS UN-BEAR-ABLE
THEY GET WEAKER IF PEOPLE KEEP THEM?
GIVING THEM TOKUJISUI DOESN'T MAKE THEM ANY STRONGER?

TOKUJISUI GIVES THEM STRONGER FANGS!
AND A BIGGER FRAME THAN THEIR WILD COUNTERPARTS
BUT…
IT ALSO MAKES THEM VULNERABLE IN SOME WAYS
*Or both

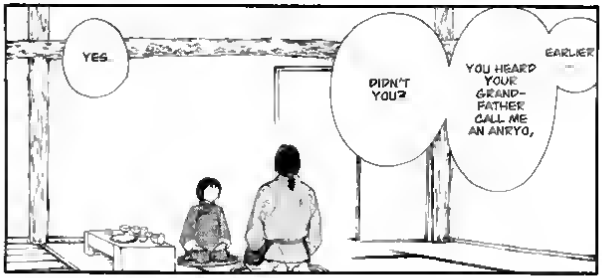
IT ISN'T COMMON KNOWLEDGE AMONG HERDSMEN.
SWEAR TO ME YOU WON'T TELL A SOUL.
FORGET
WHAT I JUST SAID.
IN WHAT WAYS?
...
I SWEAR I WON'T TELL ME, MOTHER
HOW ARE THEY VULNERABLE?
YOU WILL FIND THE ANSWER.
I KNOW...
Fwip
THINK, ERIN
WHAT IS IT THAT COMES NATURALLY TO WILD TOHDA,
BUT CANNOT BE DONE BY TOHDA KEPT IN PONDS?

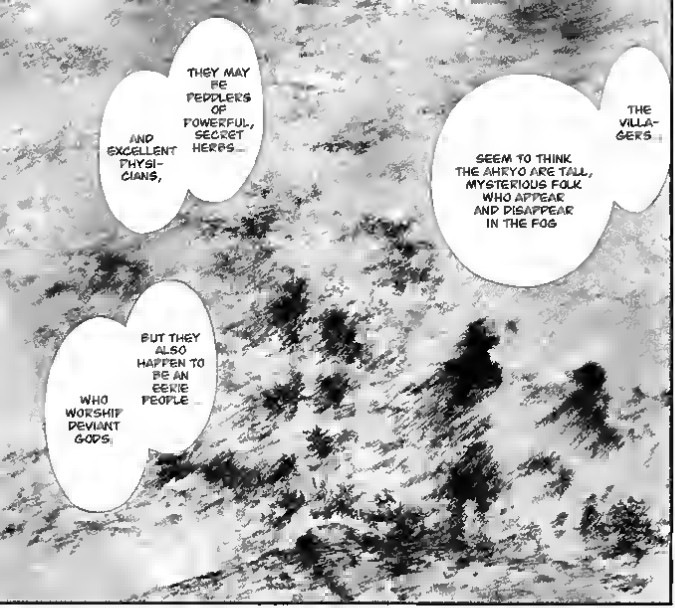
WELL,
WHY DON'T YOU TAKE THE FORK OUT OF THE POT?
DON'T TALK ABOUT IT...
UNTIL YOU UNDER-STAND...
WHY YOU SHOULDN'T
BUT...
EVEN IF YOU FIND IT, DO NOT TELL OTHER PEOPLE
WOW!
DELICIOUS, ISN'T IT?

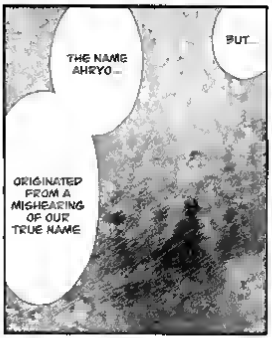
AND AT THE SAME TIME, ADD AN AROMA TO IT.
UNLIKE POTS, THEY RID MEAT OF ITS SMELL,
I USED THEM OFTEN DURING THE TIMES I SPENT IN THE MOUNTAINS
LAGOS PLANTS ARE EVERGREEN— THE LEAVES REMAIN EVEN IN WINTER
IN THIS VILLAGE...
YOU DIDN'T LIVE...
WHEN YOU WERE YOUNGER, DID YOU?
MOTHER,
Clatter
I SUPPOSE...
Gulp
Thump
Thump
Thump
...

I'VE NEVER TALKED TO YOU ABOUT THIS, HAVE I?
WERE YOU UNDER THE IMPRESSION THAT IT WAS A FORBIDDEN SUBJECT?

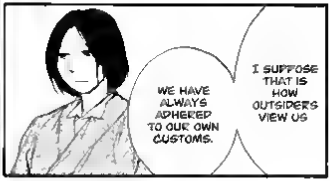
YOU'RE OLD ENOUGH TO UNDERSTAND THINGS NOW
TONIGHT I WILL TELL YOU ABOUT MYSELF, AND ABOUT YOUR FATHER
Nod


YES.
DIDN'T YOU?
YOU HEARD YOUR GRAND-FATHER CALL ME AN ANRYO, EARLIER

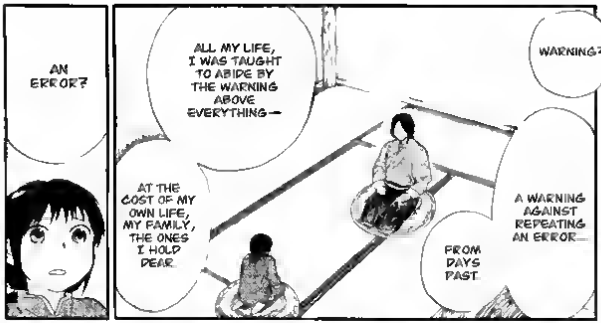

THEY MAY BE PEDDLERS OF POWERFUL, SECRET HERBS...
AND EXCELLENT PHYSI-CIANS,
THE VILLA-GERS
SEEM TO THINK THE AHRYO ARE TALL, MYSTERIOUS FOLK WHO APPEAR AND DISAPPEAR IN THE FOG
BUT THEY ALSO HAPPEN TO BE AN EERIE PEOPLE...
WHO WORSHIP DEVIANT GODS.


BUT...
THE NAME AHRYO...
ORIGINATED FROM A MISHEARING OF OUR TRUE NAME

IS THAT WHAT YOU THINK?


I SUPPOSE THAT IS HOW OUTSIDERS VIEW US
WE HAVE ALWAYS ADHERED TO OUR OWN CUSTOMS.

THE COMBINATION OF AH, 'MIST' AND RYO, 'FOLK', FITTED THE GENERAL PERCEPTION OF US SO WELL THAT IT BECAME WIDESPREAD
OUR NAME, TO BE ACCURATE, IS AOHRHO
IT MEANS 'WARNING' (AOH) 'ABIDERS' (RHO)


AN ERROR?
ALL MY LIFE, I WAS TAUGHT TO ABIDE BY THE WARNING ABOVE EVERYTHING—
AT THE COST OF MY OWN LIFE, MY FAMILY, THE ONES I HOLD DEAR
WARNING?
A WARNING AGAINST REPEATING AN ERROR...
FROM DAYS PAST

...
A TERRIBLE ERROR THAT NEARLY BLOTTED OUT
MEN AND BEASTS ALIKE

MY PEOPLE HAVE BEEN RIGOROUSLY TEACHING THEIR CHILDREN...
TO OBEY THE LAW FROM THE DAY THEY WERE BORN
FOR GENERATIONS,
AND SERVED NEITHER THE YOJE NOR THE ARHAN...
THEY BECAME NOMADS WHO LIVED IN THE WILD...
MY ANCESTORS PLEDGED TO ABIDE BY THE WARNING IN AN ATTEMPT TO PREVENT THE SAME DESTRUCTIVE ERROR FROM EVER REPEATING
PROHIBITS SETTLING IN ONE PLACE
BECAUSE ONE OF OUR LAWS...
MARRIAGE TO OUTSIDERS IS FORBIDDEN...
..!
I WAS NO LONGER AN AOHRHO
AND DECIDED TO LIVE IN THIS VILLAGE WITH HIM,
THE MOMENT I MET YOUR FATHER...
I BROKE THAT LAW.

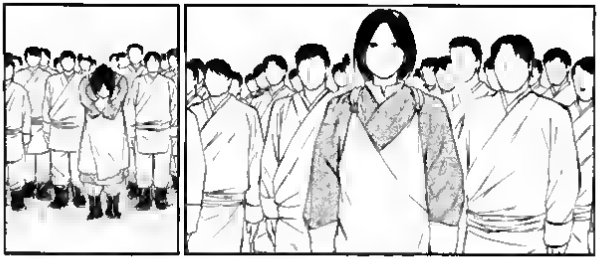
IS IT TOO DIFFICULT TO TAKE IN?
YES
OF COURSE
IN THAT CASE, KEEP WHAT I SAID IN MIND WHEN YOU'RE OLDER, LOOK BACK AND THINK
YOU WILL UNDERSTAND IT BETTER THEN
...
ERIN

I FIRST MET YOUR FATHER...
IN THE ROCKY AREA OF SAMOCK
I WAS LOOKING FOR CHACHIMO FLOWERS
WHEN I FOUND A YOUNG MAN LYING ON THE GROUND HALFWAY UP THE CLIFF
THAT WAS FATHER?
HE WAS HURT?
YES
HE'D HIT HIS HEAD BADLY,
AND HE HAD LEG FRACTURES
YES
HE TOLD ME HE'D LOST HIS FOOTING WHILE HE WAS DEER HUNTING
YOU HELPED HIM, DIDN'T YOU?
SO I DID
THAT WAS HOW I MET YOUR FATHER

ASSON, YOUR FATHER,
WAS A VERY GENTLE MAN.
HE RARELY SPOKE,
BUT HIS SMILE WOULD LIGHT UP A ROOM LIKE THE SUN PEEKING OUT BETWEEN CLOUDS
ERIN,
YOU REMIND ME OF HIM
YOUR PRESENCE BRINGS ME WARMTH.

JANGLE
JANGLE
JANGLE
JANGLE
PEIN
Neigh
TEN OF THE ARHAN'S TREASURED KIBA PIED IN YOUR CARE
IS THAT TRUE?

WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE KIBA?
COME FORWARD!
Hitch
UNFOR-TUNATELY, SIR,
IT IS TRUE

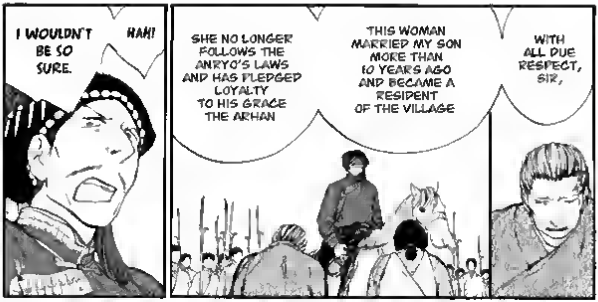


YOU, AN AHRYO?!
!
HEAVENS!
IT WAS I

WHAT WERE YOU THINKING?!
HOW DARE YOU LET AN AHRYO WOMAN TAKE CHARGE OF THE ARHAN'S TREASURED ASSETS!
I BEG YOUR FORGIVENESS, SIR
HOWEVER,
THIS WOMAN IS AN OUTSTANDING HEALER—
Wip

OUTSTANDING HEALER YOU SAY?
VERY LIKELY
THE AHRYO EMPLOY OUTLANDISH HEALING TECHNIQUES THE LOT OF THEM
Silence
...

BUT—
A TOHDA CARETAKER NEED NOT BE SKILLED IN HEALING.
WHAT MATTERS ABOVE ALL
IS UNDIVIDED LOYALTY TOWARD THE ARHAN!
AS HEAD OF THESE HERDSMEN YOU OUGHT TO HAVE KNOWN BETTER!


I WOULDN'T BE SO SURE.
HAH!
SHE NO LONGER FOLLOWS THE AHRYO'S LAWS AND HAS PLEDGED LOYALTY TO HIS GRACE THE ARHAN
THIS WOMAN MARRIED MY SON MORE THAN 10 YEARS AGO AND BECAME A RESIDENT OF THE VILLAGE
WITH ALL DUE RESPECT, SIR,

THEY WOULD SOONER KILL THEIR CHILDREN THAN DISOBEY THEIR LAWS
THE AHRYO PLACE GREAT IMPORTANCE ON THEIR LAWS, OR SO I HEAR

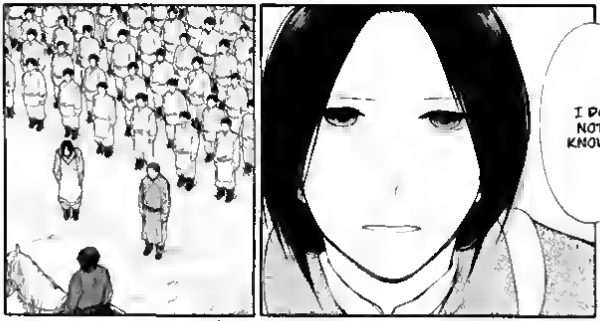
ANSWER ME!
HOW DID IT COME ABOUT THAT EVERY SINGLE ONE OF THE KIBA IN YOUR CARE DIED AND NO OTHER TOHDA?
IF YOU ARE SUCH A GOOD HEALER, YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO EXPLAIN THEIR DEATHS!

DID YOU POISON THEM?
I DID NOT
BY POISONING?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
Silence...
THE KIBA DIED BY POISONING
TO PUT IT DELICATELY...

THEREFORE, FEEDING A TOHPA A MIXTURE OF TOKUJISUI AND ITS MUCUS DOES NO HARM TO ITS HEALTH;
IT IS A WAY TO IMPART ALL THE NUTRIENTS
EVERY HERDSMAN KNOWS THE TOKUJISUI CONTAINS RATHER STRONG INGREDIENTS
THE MUCUS THAT COVERS A TOHPA'S BODY ACTS AS A PROTECTIVE LAYER.

THAT HAD NOT BEEN THE CASE DURING MY MIDNIGHT ROUND THE PREVIOUS NIGHT
I THUS WENT ABOUT GIVING THEM THEIR USUAL SERVING OF TOKUJISUI.
YESTERDAY MORNING, HOWEVER, THE MUCUS ON THE TOHPA'S BODIES HAD THINNED DOWN IN PLACES FOR NO KNOWN REASON

WHY?
YOU'RE SAYING THE CHANGE TOOK PLACE OVERNIGHT?


I DO NOT KNOW

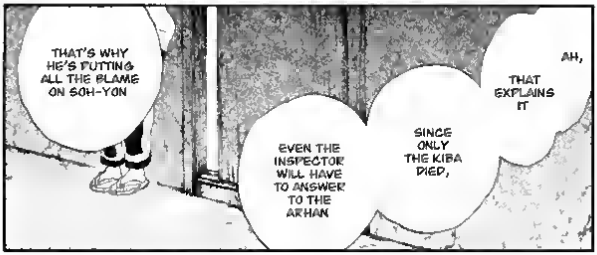
SHE WILL BE QUESTIONED AND THEN PUNISHED!
TAKE HER!

MOTHER!!
Grr
!
DON'T!
...!

I DON'T REMEMBER...

WHAT HAS HAPPENED IN THE LAST THREE DAYS.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND.
EVERYTHING SEEMS SO FAR AWAY.
SH!
YOU'RE TOO LOUD.
WHAT IF YOU WOKE THE CHILDREN?
Twitch
YOU MEAN
THE TOHDA TRIAL IS TOMORROW AT DAWN?
...
...
...
SHE DOESN'T DESERVE TO BE SO— SO HORRIBLY EXECUTED
BUT THAT'S DREADFUL


AH,
THAT EXPLAINS IT
SINCE ONLY THE KIBA DIED,
EVEN THE INSPECTOR WILL HAVE TO ANSWER TO THE ARHAN
THAT'S WHY HE'S PUTTING ALL THE BLAME ON SOH-YON

EVEN SO, IT'S TOO CRUEL TO PUNISH HER...
BY FEEDING HER TO WILD TOHDA.

Kemono no Souja